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ABSTRACT

This guide provides background information and learning activities to help teachers provide educational experiences for elementary students regarding older Americans and the process of aging. There are two major sections. The first section contains a facts-on-aging quiz and discusses facts and myths about older citizens. Examined are feelings and attitudes, family relationships, time, leisure, education, work, transportation, health, and money. The second section contains learning activities. Some examples of suggested activities include the following: Students may read and discuss books, interview senior citizens, role play family relationships, correspond as pen pals with older adults, draw pictures of how they might look as an older person, construct a family tree, and research what some famous people did after the age of 65. The publication concludes with teacher and student bibliographies. (RM)

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# DON'T STOP the MUSIC

## Unit Of Study On Older Americans

### Kindergarten Through Sixth Grade

**Oklahoma**
**State Department of Education**

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# Foreword

The Oklahoma State Department of Education recognizes the need to provide educational experiences for elementary students regarding the Older Americans and the process of aging. Don't Stop the Music - Unit of Study on Older Americans for Kindergarten-Sixth Grade was developed as an educational aid for the Oklahoma teacher in order to meet this need. We hope that the information and activities contained in this unit of study will be a useful classroom tool.

We gratefully acknowledge and thank all of the contributors in the development of this unit.

Sincerely,

Leslie Fisher
State Superintendent

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# Palmore's Facts On Aging Quiz

Each teacher should complete "Palmore's Facts on Aging Quiz" on the next page before presenting information to the students. Only five minutes of time are required to complete the quiz. It will provide the level of knowledge regarding the aged and/or any misconceptions possessed by the teacher.

Answers are given at the end of the bibliography.

## Palmore's Facts on Aging Quiz

T F (1) The majority of old people (past age 65) are senile (i.e., defective memory, disoriented, or demented).

T F (2) All five senses tend to decline in old age.

T F (3) Most old people have no interest in, or capacity, for sexual relations.

T F (4) Lung capacity tends to decline in old age.

T F (5) The majority of old people feel miserable most of the time.

T F (6) Physical strength tends to decline in old age.

T F (7) At least one tenth of the aged are living in long-stay institutions (i.e., nursing homes, mental hospitals, homes for the aged, etc.)

T F (8) Aged drivers have fewer accidents per person than drivers under age 65.

T F (9) Most older workers cannot work as effectively as younger workers.

T F (10) About 80% of the aged are healthy enough to carry out their normal activities.

T F (11) Most old people are set in their ways and unable to change.

T F (12) Old people usually take longer to learn something new.

T F (13) It is almost impossible for most old people to learn new things.

T F (14) The reaction time of most old people tends to be slower than reaction time of younger people.

T F (15) In general, most old people are pretty much alike.

T F (16) The majority of old people are seldom bored.

T F (17) The majority of old people are socially isolated and lonely.

T F (18) Older workers have fewer accidents than younger workers.

T F (19) Over 15% of the United States population are now age 65 or over.

T F (20) Most medical practitioners tend to give low priority to the aged.

T F (21) The majority of older people have incomes below the poverty level (as defined by the Federal Government).

T F (22) The majority of old people are working or would like to have some kind of work to do (including housework and volunteer work).

T F (23) Older people tend to become more religious as they age.

T F (24) The majority of old people are seldom irritated or angry.

T F (25) The health and socioeconomic status of older people (compared to younger people) in the year 2000 will probably be about the same as now.

Reprint permission from Gerintological Society, 16th and Kate, Washington, D. C. Joseph M. Holtzman and James D. Beck. "Palmore's Facts on Aging Quiz: A Reappraisal," The Gerontologist, Vol. 19, No. 1, 1979, p. 117. (Answers are on page 61.)

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# Older Citizens Facts and Myths

THE OLDER CITIZEN

America is facing one of the biggest challenges of its history. How can America help its growing number of older people to go on into their late sixties and perhaps their seventies, eighties, or nineties with comfort, happiness, and good physical and mental health? The older Americans have become the fastest-growing segment of the population of the United States of America. This has happened because of longer life spans due to medical, social, and scientific advancements. Everyday about 5,000 Americans reach the age of 65. Today Americans over 60 comprise one out of seven persons. When today's preschoolers are ready to consider retirement they will account for one in four Americans. The United States is becoming a nation of older people.

Oklahoma is facing the same change in its society: how to enhance the extra years of life for its growing number of older citizens. The growing number of aging adults will have an effect on families, employment, the economy, the educational system and governmental agencies and programs.

What is aging? Aging is the group of changes in the mental, physical, and social processes brought about by the passage of time

and influenced by the traditions, rules and expectations of the world in which people live. The rate of aging varies with different people. It is influenced by several factors: heredity, emotion, past habits, disease, and environment. Aging is natural! it is a life long process beginning at birth and ending at death.

The definition of older people varies. Every governmental agency seems to have its own. Some consider a person to be a senior citizen at age 65, some at age 60, and some at age 55. The "frail elderly" is a term often used to indicate those people are over 75 years of age. In many areas including Oklahoma, the "frail elderly" is the fastest growing group. The following information indicates the number of older Oklahomans today.

OKLAHOMA (1979) POPULATION

| TOTAL | 60+ | 65+ | 75+ |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2,892,000 | 488,748 | 364,392 | 133,583 |
| 100% | 16.9% | 12.6% | 4.6% |

OKLAHOMA'S 1979 NATIONAL RANKINGS

* The 27th State in Number of People
* The 25th State in Number of Older People
* The 9th State in Percent (%) of Older People

Different names are used to describe the past 55 age group. Some of the names are: Aging Adults, Golden Agers, Mature Americans, Older Americans, Older Citizens, Older People, Retired Persons, and Senior Citizens.

## FEELINGS AND ATTITUDES

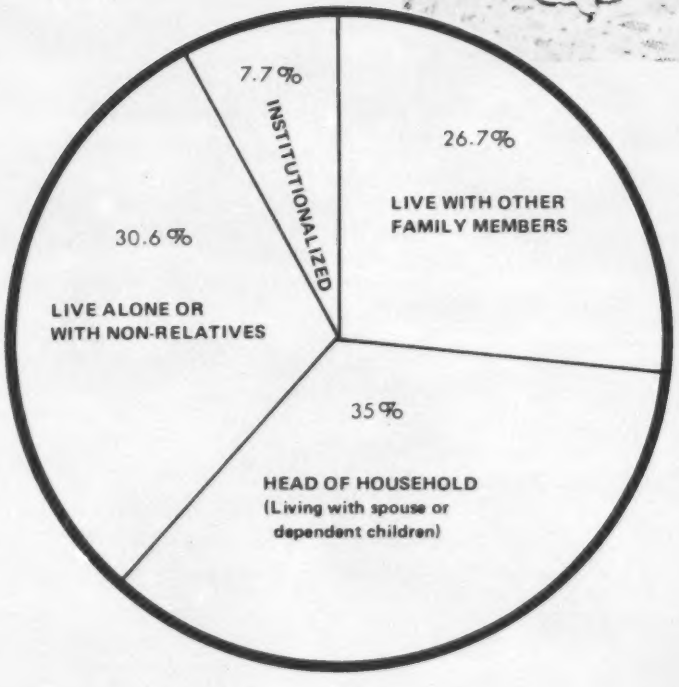
Since younger people cannot truly know what it means to be old, they are sometimes uncomfortable around older people. Adults as well as children feel most comfortable with the familiar, and old age is something foreign to almost anyone who is younger. Many younger people never know any older people except their grandparents, and their attitudes are influenced by their limited knowledge of them.

Attitudes among older people often vary. Because of their backgrounds, cultures, opinions, and experiences, their feelings and attitudes toward themselves, others, their families, age, health, and use of time differs.

## FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

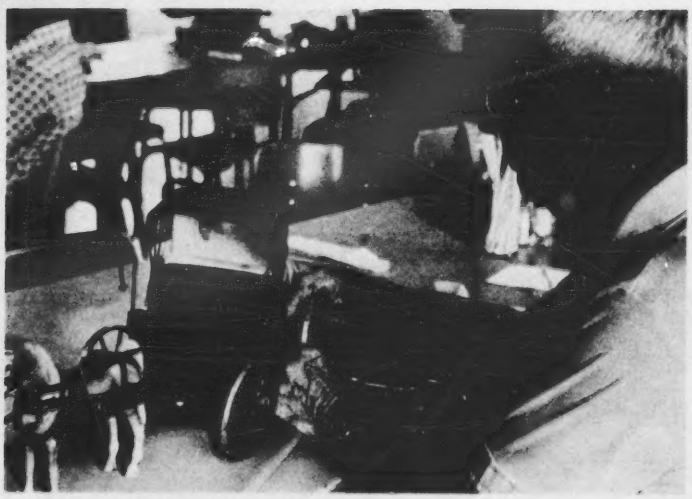
The relationship between parents and their adult children is a very complicated one, and respect for one another can make this relationship more enjoyable. No two people, young or old, are exactly alike and the unique individuality of each person must be recognized for each to appreciate the other. The older family member may require help due to changes in their mental, physical and/or social processes. However, this is not a one-way relationship. In turn the older family member may provide for their families love, affection, money, baby sitting, advice, experience, as well as a personal link with history.

About one-fourth of the older Oklahomans (26.7%) live with family members other than a spouse or dependent children. For many this means living with one of their adult children. When an older parent lives with his/her adult child, a change in roles may occur. Therefore, an adjustment for both parent and child is necessary.



# TIME

Time is a special possession of the older citizen. As compared to the younger person, the older citizen has a greater opportunity to choose how to use time. How older citizens use their time is as varied as how persons of other ages use theirs. But to be occupied, active, and busy is to be alive, and many choose ways to spend their days that keep them involved in the world around them.



## TIME AT LEISURE

While many retired people continue in paying jobs, others work on a voluntary basis. These people use their skill, knowledge, and experience to help in many different situations. Churches, schools, hospitals, social agencies, and individuals generally welcome a willing worker of any age.

Many well-organized clubs meet the needs of the older citizen for companionship and sociability. These clubs may meet on a weekly or monthly basis and often revolve around a common interest of the group, such as gardens, cards, flowers, or travel. Many older people participate in book clubs and discussion groups. Senior citizens centers also provide a place where older people can get together with one another and find acceptance, companionship, and activity.

Activities that were enjoyed in a person's younger years may continue to be enjoyed as the person becomes older. These might be sports, games, hobbies, parties, gardening, family events, or travel. The variety of interests among older people is as great as it is among the young.

## TIME IN SCHOOL

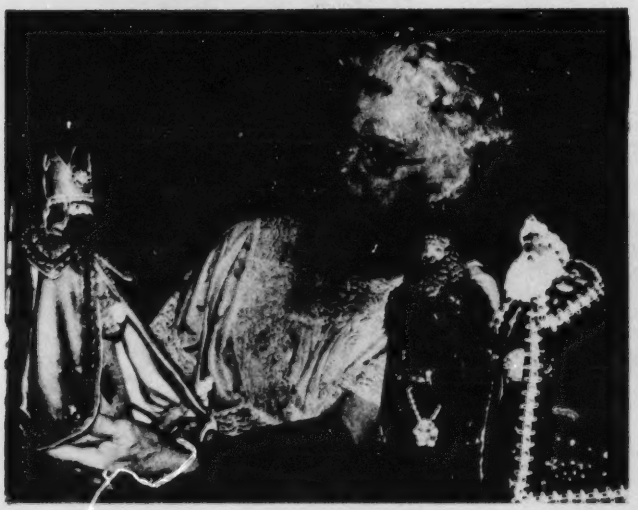
Education is the pathway to new opportunities at all ages. Many older citizens enjoy the challenge and opportunity provided by education. In the fall of 1978, 3,771 persons over the age of 51 were enrolled in Oklahoma's public colleges, taking courses for credit. Many others were attending community service classes, private colleges, and short-term classes provided by churches, senior citizens centers, and other organizations.

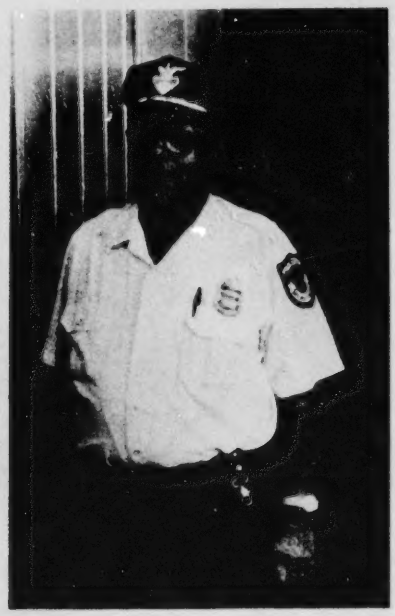
Motivation is a key factor for success in education at any age, and many mature persons have the desire to learn. In college courses

in 1980-81, 42.6% of the persons over the age of 56 made a grade point average of 3.0 or above. As long as a person maintains good physical and mental health and has intellectual stimulation, there will probably be little or no intellectual decline with age. Some abilities, such as judgement, accuracy, and general knowledge, may increase.

## TIME AT WORK

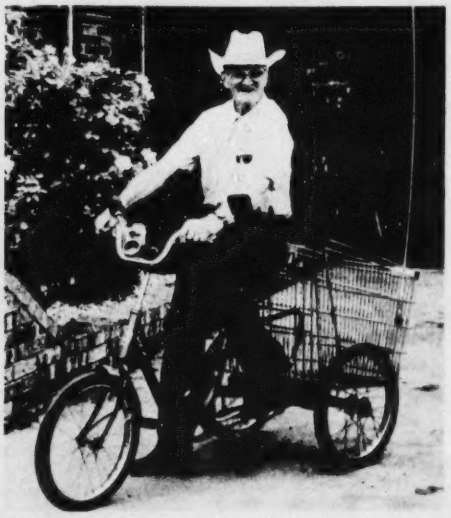
Since many employers now recognize the value of an older employee, mandatory retirement is no longer as strictly applied as it once was. There are several alternatives that protect the employee's economic status as well as his/her self-esteem. Some employees continue to work on a free-lance basis; some prepare for retirement by tapering off the workload and the time spent on the job. Other older citizens begin a new career after retirement. A hobby may become an occupation or an area of interest may lead to employment in a different field.





## LOCATION, RESIDENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

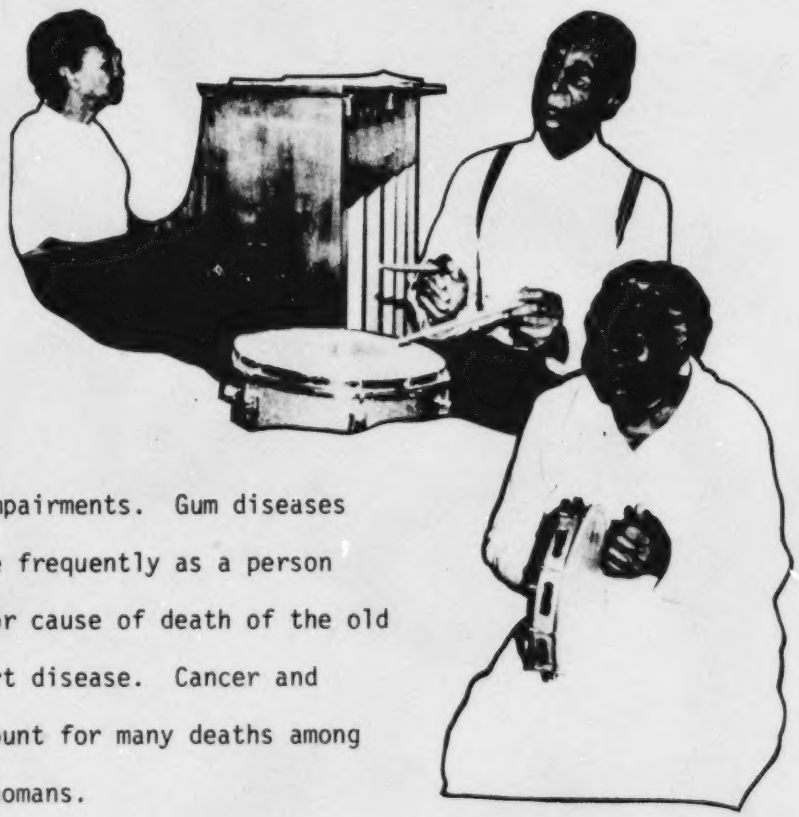
Income, health, family and personal preference are factors which help determine the location and residence of the older citizens. Seventy-five percent of the older Oklahomans live in the same community in which they spent most of their lives. Most older Oklahomans (about 62%) live in family settings as the head of the household or with other family members. About one-third of the older citizens live alone or with non-relatives. Only 7.7% of the older Oklahomans live in institutions such as nursing care facilities and mental hospitals at any given time.



Transportation is a key factor in helping the older Oklahoman because it is a link to social and medical services. The older citizen is often limited in using transportation independently. Many of the people age 65 or older do not have cars, a driver's license, or automobile insurance. Physical problems keep many from driving. Transportation for the older citizen is generally dependent on location. Many of the cities in Oklahoma have special social and health programs that help the older citizens and provide for their transportation. Many rural areas, however, do not provide these services and transportation for the older Oklahoman.

## HEALTH

Many older citizens have health, productive, and active lives. As one ages, however, impairments and disabilities often occur and dietary needs change. Health problems, both physical and mental are often the concern of the older citizen. While 54% of the Oklahomans 65 years or older have no physical limitations, 46% do have limitations. The older citizen visits the doctor more than younger people and stays in the hospital longer. Chrnoic conditions occur more often amont the older citizens. Impairments of vision and hearing increase with age. Over half the people that are identified as being legally blind within the state are 65 or older. In addition, 75% of the people who are over 75 have hearing impairments. Gum diseases also occur more frequently as a person ages. The major cause of death of the old citizen is heart disease. Cancer and strokes also count for many deaths among the older Oklahomans.



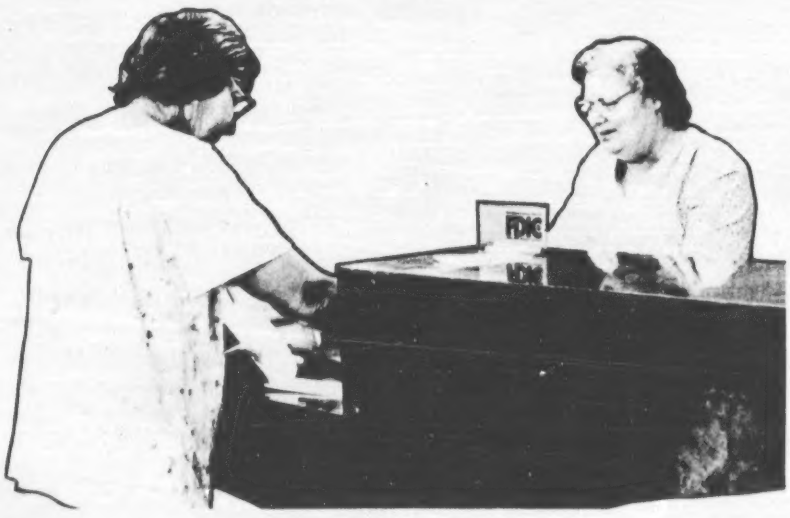
Most older citizens are in good mental health. However, they live with more of life crises than other groups. Some of these life crises are: the death of family members and friends, health problems, feeling unneeded, forced retirement, and the fear of dependency. Many of the difficulties that arise are treatable with some counseling. There are community mental health centers in Oklahoma. Their purpose is to provide the counseling needed to ease the problems of those needing help. An additional problem of aging is depression. Depression increases significantly with aging and 25% of the nation's suicides are committed by people over the age of 65.

The nutritional needs of the older citizens are about the same as younger adults. Good food is essential to good health at all ages. A variety of food supplies all the elements necessary for good nutrition. However, due to the physical process of aging, there are some differences in the food needs. The older citizen usually needs fewer calories, less fats, more proteins and sufficient vitamins, minerals and water. For some, aging has made special diets necessary and for others the foods must be prepared so that they may be easily digested.

MONEY

| % of $ Spent By Elderly Families and Individuals | |
|---|---|
| Housing | 28.9% |
| Food | 21.4% |
| Transportation | 12.8% |
| Medical Care | 8.3% |
| (Spring, 1981 Impact: Aging in Oklahoma) | |

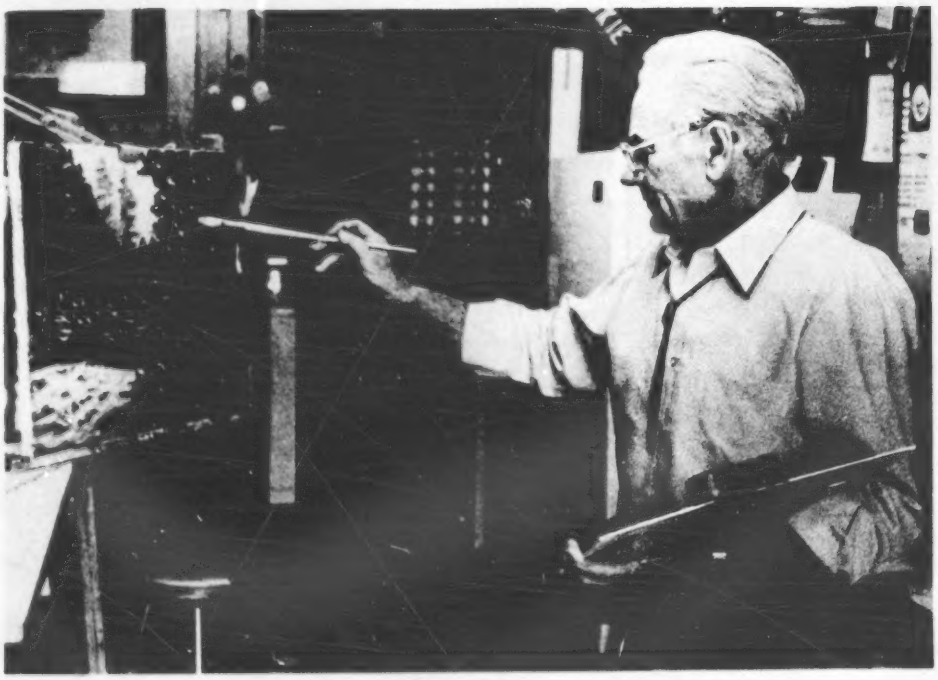
The older Oklahoman will usually have less income. Their job-related income ends at retirement. For most this occurs from 55-70 years of age. The usual age has been 65 due to government requirements. These mandatory requirements have been changed to age 70. Many have paid money into one or more retirement accounts during their years of work. One of these retirement accounts is Social Security, a Federal program required for most workers. It was devised to provide an income for the retired citizen because many would not have enough money to live an independent life after retirement without it.



The other retirement accounts are private, state, or local government group plans. People pay a certain amount of money into an account each month until they either quit that job or reitre. Upon retirement the older citizen receives a check each month from each of the retirement plans he/she has.

Retirement income is less than a job income. The retired Oklahoman may have a smaller amount of money to buy the basic necessities: food, housing, utilities, medical care and medicine, and transportation. If the retired person has only one source of retirement money, he/she may be living at or near the poverty level. For many this means doing without some things that are needed or having to depend on someone else for some of the basic necessities.

# Suggested Activities



SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES:

1. Introduce unit on aging by having the student answer the following question:

   An older person is _____ .
   (one word answer)

   Then discuss meaning of the terms positive and negative. Ask the students to decide whether their responses were positive or negative. (Repeat at the end of the unit.)

2. Read "The Mountain of Tears" by Paul David Mandel. It is the story of Yoshi, a young Japanese boy who must obey the laws of his country. They state what Yoshi must do with his aging mother, Fumiko. The wisdom that comes with age provides a solution. Find other stories from other cultures about aging.

3. Have the students answer the question "What would you want changed before you are old?" Have them write a short paragraph and illustrate it.

4. Prepare an oral history of the town, state, nation, or special event. Interview the older Oklahomans on tape. Transcribe into a text for the students to illustrate. If video-tape equipment is available, have the student video-tape the interviews.

   NOTE: If this approach is used, file the tapes in the school library media center. They would become a valuable source of historical and sociological information in the future.

5. Role play family relationships. Assign the role of parent, to one student and role of child to another student. Provide them with role playing situations to interpret things that deal with transportation, health care, economics, and social behavior. Then, ask the students to reverse roles. Have the students discuss the roles and their feelings.

6. Have the students do a "5-Step Study" of the older Oklahoman. Have them answer the following five questions. The questions could also serve as a pre-test and post-test for an aging unit as well as research starters.

    1. Who are the older people?
    2. Where do they come from?
    3. Where are they going?
    4. What keeps them from getting there?
    5. What do they need to get there?

7. Divide the class into committees to find answers to some of the questions listed on the page "Questions for Students." Have them use all possible resources to find their answers -- material listed in the bibliography; city, county, and state offices; school and city libraries; medical personnel; elderly persons; nursing home personnel. Have each committee report its findings to the class.

8. Read "Growing Older" by George Ancona. Have the students tape interviews with older citizens. Share the tapes with the other class members. Have the students list questions prior to the interview. Questions might include:

    How old are you?
    How do you feel about the world?
    What's your earliest memory?
    Tell me about the jobs you've had?
    Tell me about the homes you've lived in.
    Which home was your favorite and why?
    What would you like changed in your life?
    How do you feel about retirement at age 65?
    What do you worry about?
    What do you enjoy doing?

    Caution the students to be sensitive during the interview. Some persons are not comfortable discussing certain subjects or times in their lives.

9. Have students bring pictures of older people showing differert facial expressions. The students could draw what they think made that person feel that way.

10. Show students pictures of people of all ages. Ask the students to arrange the pictures from the youngest to the oldest. Talk about the physical changes that have occurred at each age.

11. Have a resource person come to talk to the students about activities he/she performs with regard to the older people. For example, invite a physical therapist, nurse, recreational therapist, activities director for nursing home, director of senior citizens center, hostess for senior citizens travel club, or occupational therapist.

12. Make a slide presentation of a nursing home. The slides could include the building, facilities provided, activities, and the people. Use the slides for a class discussion; how the nursing home compares with the student's home, the feelings of the people living there, whether or not the activities involve the people in the home.

13. Set up pen pal correspondence with the students and older citizens.

14. Invite active senior citizens of the community to talk about how things are changing in the community, a recent trip, a special hobby, their occupations.

15. List myths or stereotypes the students have about older people. Ask the students to find out how these myths or stereotypes began, whether or not each is true, why the myths continue, and what can be done to educate people concerning older citizens.

16. Have the students cut out magazine pictures of items they associate with older adults and make a collage. Stories may be written about their pictures.

17. Ask the student to draw pictures of how they might look as an older person. Discuss the physical, social and emotional changes that might take place.

18. Ask the students to bring pictures of their family members and have them place the pictures in chronological order. Discuss the stages of life from an infant to an older adult.

19. Have the students bring articles from newspapers or magazines about older people and their activities, accomplishments, or interests. Make a bulletin board display using these articles. Add students' reports on "Super Senior Citizens" to the display.

20. Plant some zinnia or bean seeds. Watch the plants grow during the school year. Discuss growth stages.

21. Have a class pet. Discuss growth and aging stages whenever appropriate.

22. Arrange a display of a series of photographs of aged persons. Ask the class to respond to the following series of eight questions.

    1. Do you know somebody who is old?
    2. Who do you know who is old?
    3. How can you tell he/she is old?
    4. What makes people old?
    5. Is your mother old?
    6. Is your father old?
    7. Would you like to be old? Why (or why not)?
    8. Do you think you will ever get old?

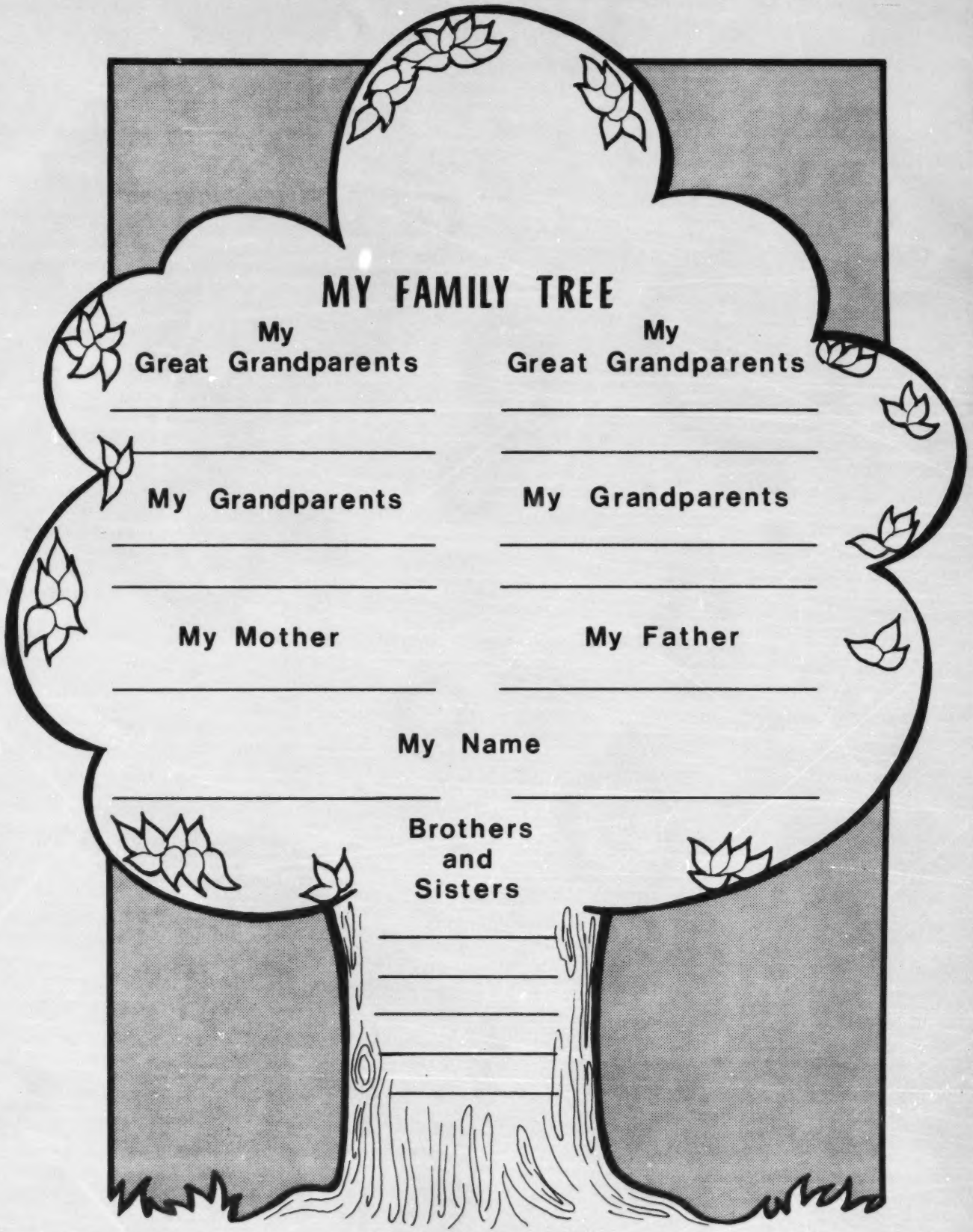
23. Have the students find more information on:

THE ELDERHOSTEL PROGRAM

"The Elderhostel is a special place for learning. The word, elderhostel, combines two words, Elder for the older people and hostel which means staying together while traveling. Each summer many older people go to school at a college or university in the United States and Canada. The sessions are short-term, usually lasting for one week. The older person must be 60 years of age to enroll.

They are able to attend classes in subjects that they want. Tours and field trips to museums are included. Several Oklahoma universities participate in the network.'

("OSU Conducting Classes Catering to Elderly During Hostel Program" The Sunday Oklahoman, June 21, 1981, page 18.)


MY FAMILY TREE
My Great Grandparents
My Great Grandparents
My Grandparents
My Grandparents
My Mother
My Father
My Name
Brothers and Sisters

TIME LINE

A time line records important events in a person's life over a given period of time. Make a time line for an older person you know or have read about.

Select six to eight facts about the person to record on the time line.

List the facts here and then make the time line.

1._____

2._____

3._____

4._____

5._____

6._____

7._____

8._____

Time Line of _____

_____

# SUPER SENIOR CITIZENS

"You're never too young or too old if you've got talent. Let's recognize that age has little to do with ability." (Forbes and Fritzsimons)

Find out what each person listed did after the age of 65.

Konrad Adenauer
Leo Tolstoy
Somerset Maugham
Aleksandr Kerenski
Frank Lloyd Wright
Coco Chanel
Michelangelo
Maurice Chevalier
Pablo Casals
Albert Schweitzer
Arthur Rubinstein
Thomas Edison
Grandma Moses
Bertrand Russell
Winston Churchill
Eamon de Valera
Benjamin Franklin
Adolph Zukor
Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Robert Frost
Mary Baker Eddy
Pablo Picasso
Ronald Reagan
Jacques Cousteau
George Burns
Bob Hope
George Bernard Shaw
Golda Meir
Milton Berle
Salvador Dali
William Harrison
James Buchanan
Queen Victoria
Maggie Koon
Margaret Mead
Barbara Cartland
Carl Sandburg
Leopold Stokowski

## VOCABULARY

aging
attitude
centenarian
chronic
depression (medical)
disability
geriatric
gerontology
feeling
impairment
leisure
life expectancy
life span
limitations
mandatory
medicine
mobile meals
nursing home
nutrition
pension
poverty level
retirement
senility
senior citizens center
social security
volunteer

## QUESTIONS FOR STUDENTS

Who is considered "old"?

How many older people are there in the United States?

How many older people are there in Oklahoma?

Are there more older people living today than ten years ago?

What is gerontology?

How does your body change?

- Why does skin wrinkle?
- How does eyesight change?
- Is hearing loss a normal part of aging?
- How is the sense of taste affected by age?
- Why does hair turn grey?

Where do grandmothers and grandfathers live in my community?

What other kinds of places do grandmothers and grandfathers live in?

Which state has the most older people living there?

Does our community have special programs or activities for the older person? Who pays for these special programs?

Do old people have problems with money? Where does their money come from?

Who gets Social Security? Is it enough money for the elderly?

What do older people do in their spare time?

What is a nursing home?

Who organizes nursing homes? Who pays for nursing services?

What type of jobs are available in a nursing home?

How do older people feel about the rest of the world?

How does the rest of the world feel about them?

What is senility?

Do people die of old age?

What are the big differences between young and old?

Can the senior citizen vote?

What's good about being old?

How does an older person live on less money when he/she retires?

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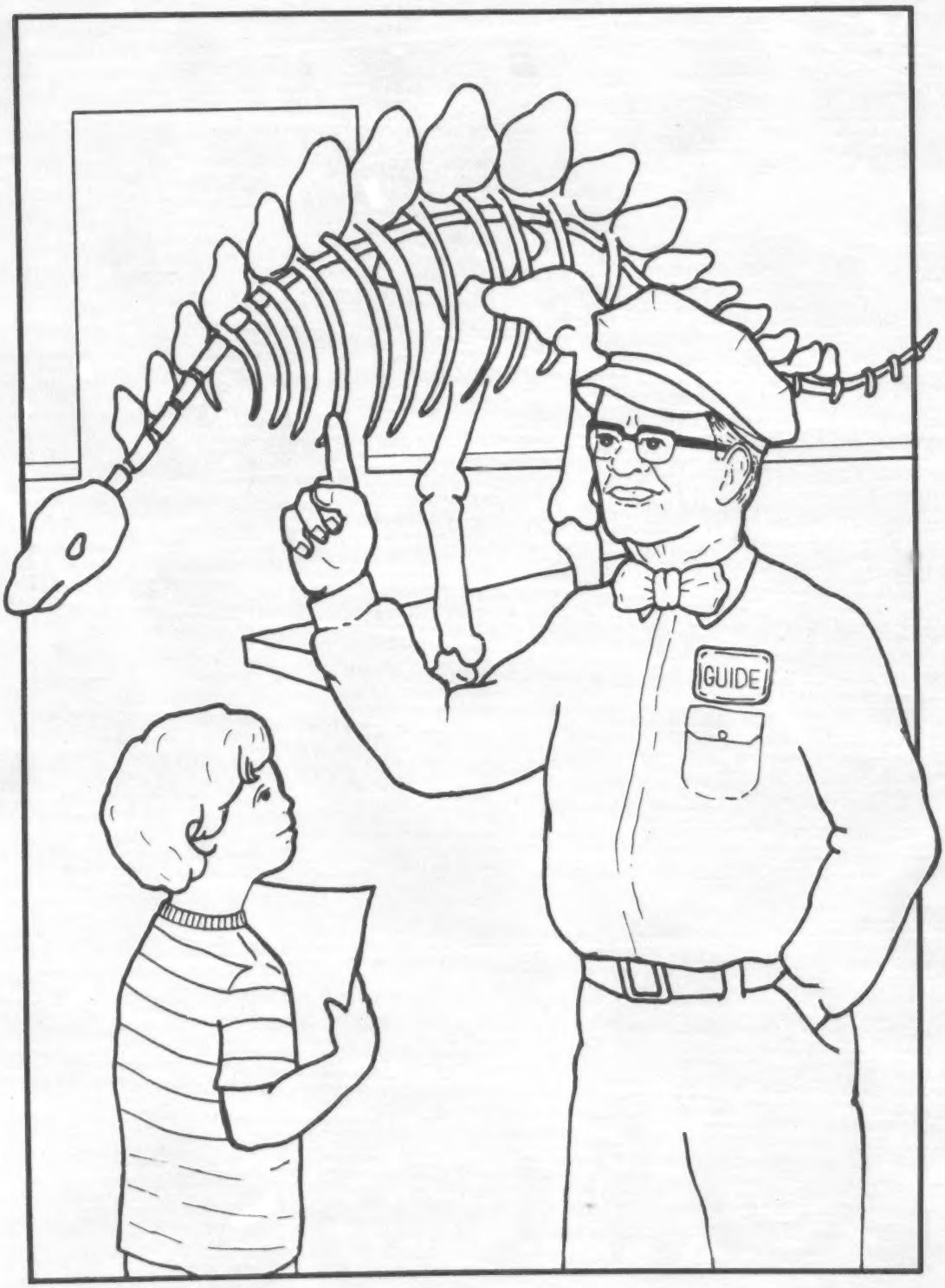
GUIDE

*SPECIALS*
POTATOES 10# $1.55
HAMBURGER $1.18 lb
NAPKINS
SOFT DRINKS
MILK ½ GAL. $



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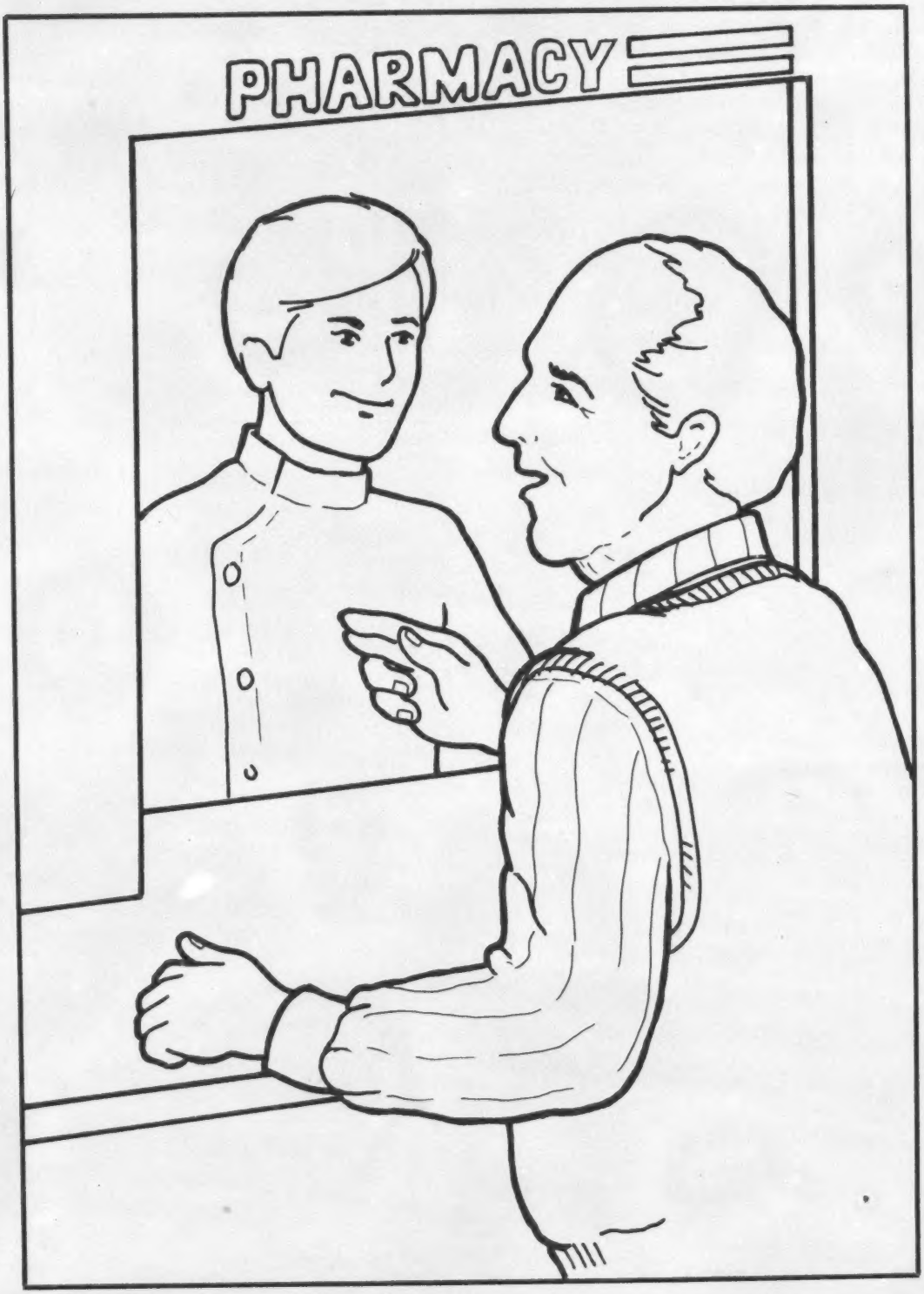
BUS
STOP


PHARMACY

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## AVAILABLE BROCHURES

Many brochures concerning the older Americans are available. Several would be of value in a classroom study. Contact the Special Unit on Aging for a list and write the Administration on Aging for a copy of Publications of the Administration on Aging.

Special Unit on Aging
Department of Human Services
P.O. Box 25352
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73125
(405) 521-2281

Chief, Public Inquiries and Publications
Distribution Division
Administration on Aging
Office of Human Development
Washington, D.C. 20201

## Answers to "Palmore's Facts on Aging Quiz"

All odd-numbered questions are false.
All even-numbered questions are true.

## EVALUATION
### DON'T STOP THE MUSIC

The State Department of Education would appreciate your help. Please answer the following questions and return this page to the address listed below.

1. Circle grade level taught: K 1 2 3 4 5 6

2. Was the content of this publication generally appropriate for your classroom? Yes_____ No_____

3. Was the information:
   most helpful_____ of no help_____ of some help_____

4. Which section most complemented your particular unit of study?

5. What are some related types of publications that would be of use to you?

6. Comments/suggestions:

Name (optional):_____

Please return to: Sharon A. Lease, Curriculum Coordinator
Curriculum Section
State Department of Education
2500 North Lincoln Boulevard, Room 3-82
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73105